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HEART AND LIFE BOOKLETS. No. 8.

RELIGION IN COMMON LIFE

JOHN CAIRD

WITH INTRODUCTION BY JONATHAN NIELD

NEW EDITION

A SERMON PREACHED IN CRATHIE
CHURCH BALMORAL BEFORE QUEEN
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AT HER COMMAND

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

A WORD or two as to the circumstances under which this now famous sermon was delivered may not be without interest.

On October 14, 1855, the 'Minister of Errol' (as John Caird then was) preached in Crathie Church before Queen Victoria and Prince Albert; shortly afterwards the words spoken on that occasion were reproduced in pamphlet form, 'by Her Majesty's command.' The Master of Balliol has told us, that his brother would not have published this sermon at all, had it not been for the Royal insistence. This diffidence in regard to his own attainments was characteristic of the man throughout; of him it can be most truly affirmed that he was 'ever a learner' in the great

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school of life. Made famous at one bound by the publication of this sermon, he embarked on a career of distinguished achievement as preacher, writer, and University principal. It is sometimes contended that philosophy disqualifies for teaching on the side of the practical and the emotional; certainly this was not so in the case of John Caird, who, while he could profoundly move men through his great gifts of religious oratory, could also wrestle in the privacy of his study with those ultimate problems, which the few only know how to state—much less solve. For him the true and the good were conjoined by an inherent necessity: a religion that appealed to tradition or mere wonder he condemned as inadequate, urging that the highest Christian experience indicates 'a reasonable faith,' not a hasty credulity.

In such a life, of course, there was bound to be a large readjustment of ideas; but, though theological forms might change, the principles of the

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Christian religion were for him unassailable. Whatever alterations in expression Dr. Caird's later philosophical investigations might render desirable, the essential teaching of this early utterance remained true and valid through all the years that followed. And this stirring plea for religion as *the mainspring of every-day experience*, is just as much needed by us of a new generation as it was by the men and women of fifty years ago.

JONATHAN NIELD.

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•ROMANS xii. 11.—'Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord.'

To combine business with religion, to keep up a spirit of serious piety amidst the stir and distraction of a busy and active life—this is one of the most difficult parts of a Christian's trial in this world. It is comparatively easy to be religious in the church—to collect our thoughts and compose our feelings, and enter, with an appearance of propriety and decorum, into the offices of religious worship, amidst the quietude of the Sabbath, and within the still and sacred precincts of the house of prayer. But to be religious in the world—to be pious and holy and earnest-minded in the

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counting-room, the manufactory, the market-place, the field, the farm; to carry out our good and solemn thoughts and feelings into the throng and thoroughfare of daily life—this is the great difficulty of our Christian calling. No man not lost to all moral influence can help feeling his worldly passions calmed, and some measure of seriousness stealing over his mind, when engaged in the performance of the more awful and sacred rites of religion; but the atmosphere of the domestic circle, the exchange, the street, the city's throng, amidst coarse work and cankering cares and toils, is a very different atmosphere from that of a communion-table. Passing from the one to the other has often seemed as if the sudden transition from a tropical to a polar climate—from balmy warmth and sunshine to murky mist and freezing cold. And it appears sometimes as difficult to maintain the strength and steadfastness of religious principle and feeling when

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we go forth from the church into the world as it would be to preserve an exotic alive in the open air in winter, or to keep the lamp that burns steadily within doors from being blown out if you take it abroad unsheltered from the wind.

So great, so all but insuperable, has this difficulty ever appeared to men, that it is but few who set themselves honestly and resolutely to the effort to overcome it. The great majority, by various shifts or expedients, evade the hard task of being good and holy, at once in the church and in the world.

In ancient times, for instance, it was, as we all know, the not uncommon expedient among devout persons—men deeply impressed with the thought of an eternal world and the necessity of preparing for it, but distracted by the effort to attend to the duties of religion amidst the business and temptations of secular life—to fly the world altogether, and, abandoning society and all social claims, to betake themselves to some

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hermit solitude, some quiet and cloistered retreat, where, as they fondly deemed, 'the world forgetting, by the world forgot,' their work would become worship, and life be uninterruptedly devoted to the cultivation of religion in the soul. In our own day the more common device, where religion and the world conflict, is not that of the superstitious recluse, but one even much less safe and venial. Keen for this world, yet not willing to lose all hold on the next—eager for the advantages of time, yet not prepared to abandon all religion and stand by the consequences, there is a very numerous class who attempt to compromise the matter—to treat religion and the world like two creditors whose claims cannot both be liquidated by compounding with each for a share—though in this case a most disproportionate share—of their time and thought. 'Everything in its own place!' is the tacit reflection of such men. 'Prayers, sermons, holy reading'—they will

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scarcely venture to add 'God'—'are for Sundays; but week-days are for the sober business, the real, practical affairs of life. Enough if we give the Sunday to our religious duties; we cannot be always praying and reading the Bible. Well enough for clergymen and good persons who have nothing else to do to attend to religion through the week; but for us, we have other and more practical matters to mind.' And so the result is that religion is made altogether a Sunday thing—a robe too fine for common wear, but taken out solemnly on state occasions, and solemnly put away when the state occasion is over. Like an idler in a crowded thoroughfare, religion is jostled aside in the daily throng of life, as if it had no business there. Like a needful yet disagreeable medicine, men will be content to take it now and then, for the soul's health, but they cannot, and will not, make it their daily fare—the substantial and staple nutriment of their life.

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Now, you will observe that the idea of religion which is set forth in the text, as elsewhere in Scripture, is quite different from any of these notions. The text speaks as if the most diligent attention to our worldly business were not by any means incompatible with spirituality of mind and serious devotion to the service of God. It seems to imply that religion is not so much *a* duty as a something that has to do with *all* duties—not a tax to be paid periodically and got rid of at other times, but a ceaseless, all-pervading, inexhaustible tribute to Him who is not only the object of religious worship, but the end of our very life and being. It suggests to us the idea that piety is not for Sundays only, but for all days; that spirituality of mind is not appropriate to one set of actions, and an impertinence and intrusion with reference to others, but, like the act of breathing, like the circulation of the blood, like the silent growth of the stature, a process that may be going

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on simultaneously with all our actions—when we are busiest as when we are idlest; in the church, in the world; in solitude, in society; in our grief and in our gladness; in our toil and in our rest; sleeping, waking; by day, by night—amidst all the engagements and exigencies of life. For you perceive that in one breath—as duties not only compatible, but necessarily and inseparably blended with each other—the text exhorts us to be at once ‘not slothful in business,’ and ‘servent in spirit, serving the Lord.’

I shall now attempt to prove and illustrate the idea thus suggested to us—the compatibility of religion with the business of common life.

We have, then, Scripture authority for asserting that it is not impossible to live a life of fervent piety amidst the most engrossing pursuits and engagements of the world. We are to make good this conception of life—that the hardest-wrought man of trade, or com-

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sacrifice proves that no such sacrifice is demanded. He who rules the world is no arbitrary tyrant prescribing impracticable labours. In the material world there are no conflicting laws, and no more, we may rest assured, are there established in the moral world any two laws one or other of which must needs be disobeyed.

Now, one thing is certain—that there is in the moral world a law of labour. Secular labour, in all cases a duty, is in most cases a necessity. God might have made us independent of work; He might have nourished us like 'the fowls of the air and the lilies of the field,' which 'toil not, neither do they spin'; He might have rained down our daily food, like the manna of old, from heaven, or caused Nature to yield it in unsolicited profusion to all, and so set us free to a life of devotion. But, forasmuch as He has not done so—forasmuch as He has so constituted us that without work we cannot eat; that if

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men ceased for a single day to labour the machinery of life would come to a stand, an arrest be laid on science, ~~civilization~~, social progress, on everything that is conducive to the welfare of man in the present life—we may safely conclude that religion, which is also good for man, which is, indeed, the supreme good of man, is not inconsistent with hard work. It must undoubtedly be the design of our gracious God that all this toil for the supply of our physical necessities, this incessant occupation amid the things that perish, shall be no obstruction, but rather a help, to our spiritual life. The weight of a clock seems a heavy drag on the delicate movements of its machinery; but so far from arresting or impeding those movements, it is indispensable to their steadiness, balance, accuracy. There must be some analogous action of what seems the clog and drag-weight of worldly work on the finer movements of man's spiritual being.

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The planets in the heavens have a twofold motion, in their orbits and on their axes—the one motion not interfering, but carried on simultaneously and in perfect harmony with the other; so must it be that man's twofold activities round the heavenly and the earthly centre disturb not nor jar with each other. He who diligently discharges the duties of the earthly may not less sedulously—nay, at the same moment—fulfil those of the heavenly sphere, at once 'diligent in business' and 'fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.'

And that this is so—that this blending of religion with the work of common life is not impossible—you will readily perceive if you consider for a moment what, according to the right and proper notion of it, religion is. What do we mean by 'religion'?

Religion may be viewed in two aspects. It is a *science* and it is an *art*; in other words, a system of doctrines to be believed and a system of

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duties to be done. View it in either light, and the point we are insisting on may, without difficulty, be made good. View it as a science, as truth to be understood and believed. If religious truth were, like many kinds of secular truth, hard, intricate, abstruse, demanding for its study, not only the highest order of intellect, but all the resources of education, books, learned leisure, then, indeed, to most men, the blending of religion with the necessary avocations of life would be an impossibility. In that case it would be sufficient excuse for irreligion to plead, 'My lot in life is inevitably one of incessant care and toil, of busy, anxious thought, and wearing work. Inextricably involved every day and hour as I am in the world's business, how is it possible for me to devote myself to this high and abstract science?'

'If religion were thus, like the higher mathematics or metaphysics, a science based on the most recondite and elabo-

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rate reasonings, capable of being mastered only by the acutest minds after years of study and laborious investigation, then might it well be urged by many an unlettered man of toil, 'I am no scholar; I have no head to comprehend these hard dogmas and doctrines. Learning and religion are no doubt fine things, but they are not for humble and hard-wrought folk like me.' In this case, indeed, the Gospel would be no Gospel at all, no good news of heavenly love and mercy to the whole sin-ruined race of man, but only a Gospel for scholars, a religion, like the ancient philosophies, for a scanty minority, clever enough to grasp its principles, and set free from active business to devote themselves to the development and discussion of its doctrines.

But the Gospel is no such system of high and abstract truth. The salvation it offers is not the prize of a lofty intellect, but of a lowly heart. The mirror

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in which its grand truths are reflected is not a mind of calm and philosophic abstraction, but a heart of earnest purity. Its light shines best and fullest, not on a life undisturbed by business, but on a soul unstained by sin. The religion of Christ, while it affords scope for the loftiest intellect in the contemplation and development of its glorious truths, is yet, in the exquisite simplicity of its essential facts and principles, patent to the simplest mind. Rude, untutored, toil-worn you may be, but if you have wit enough to guide you in the commonest round of daily toil, you have wit enough to learn the way to be saved. The truth as it is in Jesus, whilst, in one view of it, so profound that the highest archangel's intellect may be lost in the contemplation of its mysterious depths, is yet, in another, so simple that the lisping babe at a mother's knee may learn its meaning.

Again: View religion as an *art*, and,

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in this light, too, its compatibility with a busy and active life in the world it will not be difficult to perceive. For religion as an art differs from secular arts in this respect, that it may be practised simultaneously with other arts—with all other work and occupation in which we may be engaged. A man cannot be studying architecture and law at the same time. The medical practitioner cannot be engaged with his patients, and at the same time planning houses or building bridges—practising, in other words, both medicine and engineering at one and the same moment. The practice of one secular art excludes for the time the practice of other secular arts. But not so, with the art of religion. This is the universal art, the common, all-embracing profession. It belongs to no one set of functionaries, to no special class of men. Statesman, soldier, lawyer, physician, poet, painter, tradesman, farmer—men of every craft and calling in life—may, while in the

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actual discharge of the duties of their varied vocations, be yet, at the same moment, discharging the duties of a higher and nobler vocation—practising the art of a Christian. Secular arts, in most cases, demand of him who would attain to eminence in any one of them an almost exclusive devotion of time, and thought, and toil. The most versatile genius can seldom be master of more than one art, and for the great majority the only calling must be that by which they earn their daily bread. Demand of the poor tradesman or peasant, whose every hour is absorbed in the struggle to earn a competency for himself and his family, that he shall be also a thorough proficient in the art of the physician, or lawyer, or sculptor, and you demand an impossibility. If religion were an art such as these, few indeed could learn it. The two admonitions, 'Be diligent in business,' and 'Be fervent in spirit serving the Lord,' would be reciprocally destructive.

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But religion is no such art; for it is the *art of being and of doing good*. To be an adept in it is to become just, truthful, sincere, self-denied, gentle, forbearing, pure in word and thought and deed. And the school for learning this art is not the closet, but the world—not some hallowed spot where religion is taught, and proficients, when duly trained, are sent forth into the world—but the world itself—the coarse, profane, common world, with its cares and temptations, its rivalries and competitions, its hourly, ever-recurring trials of temper and character. This is, therefore, an art which all can practise, and for which every profession and calling, the busiest and most absorbing, afford scope and discipline. When a child is learning to write, it matters not of what words the copy set to him is composed, the thing desired being that, whatever he writes, he learn to write well. When a man is learning to be a Christian, it matters not what his par-

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Secular work in life may be—the work he does is but the copy-line set to him—the main thing to be considered is that he learn to live well. The form is nothing ; the execution is everything. It is true, indeed, that prayer, holy reading, meditation, the solemnities and services of the Church, are necessary to religion, and that these can be practised only apart from the work of secular life. But it is to be remembered that all such holy exercises do not terminate in themselves. They are but steps in the ladder to heaven, good only as they help us to climb. They are the irrigation and enriching of the spiritual soil—worse than useless if the crop become not more abundant. They are, in short, but means to an end—good only in so far as they help us to be good and to do good—to glorify God and do good to man ; and that end can perhaps best be attained by him whose life is a busy one, whose avocations bear him daily into contact with his fellows, into the intercourse of

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society, into the heart of the world. No man can be a thorough proficient in navigation who has never been at sea, though he may learn the theory of it at home. No man can become a soldier by studying books on military tactics in his closet ; he must in actual service acquire those habits of coolness, courage, discipline, address, rapid combination, without which the most learned in the theory of strategy or engineering will be but a schoolboy soldier after all. And, in the same way, a man in solitude and study may become a most learned theologian, or may train himself into the timid, effeminate piety of what is technically called 'the religious life.' But never, in the highest and holiest sense, can he become a *religious man* until he has acquired those habits of daily self-denial, of resistance to temptation, of kindness, gentleness, humility, sympathy, active beneficence, which are to be acquired only in daily contact with mankind. Tell us not, then, that the

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man of business, the bustling tradesman, the toil-worn labourer, has little or no time to attend to religion. As well tell us that the pilot, amid the winds and storms, has no leisure to attend to navigation—or the general, on the field of battle, to the art of war! Where *will* he attend to it? Religion is not a perpetual moping over good books—religion is not even prayer, praise, holy ordinances; these are necessary to religion—no man can be religious without them. But religion, I repeat, is mainly and chiefly the glorifying God amid the duties and trials of the world—the guiding our course amid the adverse winds and currents of temptation, by the starlight of duty and the compass of divine truth—the bearing us manfully, wisely, courageously, for the honour of Christ, our great Leader, in the conflict of life. Away, then, with the notion that ministers and devotees may be religious, but that a religious and holy life is impracticable in the rough and busy world!

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Nay, rather, believe me, *that* is the proper scene, the peculiar and appropriate field for religion—the place in which to prove that piety is not a dream of Sundays and solitary hours; that it can bear the light of day; that it can wear well amid the rough jostlings, the hard struggles, the coarse contacts of common life—the place, in one word, to prove how possible it is for a man to be at once ‘not slothful in business’ and ‘fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.’

Another consideration, which I shall adduce in support of the assertion, that it is not impossible to blend religion with the business of common life, is this: that religion consists, *not so much in doing spiritual or sacred acts, as in doing secular acts from a sacred or spiritual motive.*

There is a very common tendency in our minds to classify actions according to their outward form, rather than according to the spirit or motive which pervades them. Literature is sometimes arbitrarily divided into ‘sacred’

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and 'profane' literature, history into 'sacred' and 'profane' history — in which classification the term 'profane' is applied, not to what is bad or unholy, but to everything that is not technically sacred or religious—to all literature that does not treat of religious doctrines and duties, and to all history save Church history. And we are very apt to apply the same principle to actions. Thus, in many pious minds there is a tendency to regard all the actions of common life as so much, by an unfortunate necessity, lost to religion. Prayer, the reading of the Bible and devotional books, public worship, and buying, selling, digging, sowing, bartering, money-making, are separated into two distinct and hostile categories. The religious heart and sympathies are thrown entirely into the former, and the latter are barely tolerated as a bondage incident to our fallen state, but almost of necessity tending to turn aside the heart from God.

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But what God hath cleansed, why should we call common or unclean? The tendency in question, though founded on right feeling, is surely a mistaken one. For it is to be remembered that moral qualities reside not in actions, but in the agent who performs them, and that it is the spirit of motive from which we do any work that constitutes it base or noble, worldly or spiritual, secular or sacred. The actions of an automaton may be outwardly the same as those of a moral agent; but who attributes to them goodness or badness? A musical instrument may discourse sacred melodies better than the holiest lip can sing them; but who thinks of commending it for its piety? It is the same with actions as with places. Just as no spot or scene on earth is in itself more or less holy than another, but the presence of a holy heart may hallow—of a base one, desecrate—any place where it dwells, so with actions. Many actions, materially

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great and noble, may yet, because of the spirit that prompts and pervades them, be really ignoble and mean; and, on the other hand, many actions, externally mean and lowly, may, because of the state of his heart who does them, be truly exalted and honourable. It is possible to fill the highest station on earth, and go through the actions pertaining to it in a spirit that degrades all its dignities and renders all its high and courtly doings essentially sordid and vulgar. And it is no mere sentimentality to say that there may dwell in a lowly mechanic's or household servant's breast a spirit that dignifies the coarsest toils and 'renders drudgery divine.' Herod of old was a slave, though he sat upon a throne; but who will say that the work of that carpenter's shop at Nazareth was not noble and kingly work indeed!

And as the mind constitutes high or low, so secular or spiritual. A life spent amidst holy things may be intensely

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secular; a life, the most of which is passed in the thick and throng of the world, may be holy and divine.

minister, for instance, preaching, praying, ever speaking holy words and performing sacred acts, may be all the while doing actions no more holy than those of the printer who prints Bibles, or of the bookseller who sells them; for, in both cases alike, the whole affair may be nothing more than a trade. Nay, the comparison tells worse for the former, for the secular trade is innocent and commendable, but the trade which traffics and tampers with holy things, is, beneath all its mock solemnity, 'earthly, sensual, devilish.' So, to adduce one other example, the public worship of God is holy work; no man can be living a holy life who neglects it. But the public worship of God may be—and with multitudes who frequent our churches is—degraded into work most worldly, most unholy, most distasteful to the

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great Object of our homage. He 'to whom all hearts be open, all desires known,' discerns how many of you have come hither to-day from the earnest desire to hold communion with the Father of Spirits, to open your hearts to Him, to unburden yourselves in His loving presence of the cares and crosses that have been pressing hard upon you through the past week, and by common prayer and praise, and the hearing of His Holy Word, to gain fresh incentive and energy for the prosecution of His work in the world; and how many, on the other hand, from no better motive, perhaps, than curiosity or old habit, or regard to decency and respectability, or the mere desire to get rid of yourselves and pass a vacant hour that would hang heavy on your hands. And who can doubt that, where such motives as these prevail, to the piercing, unerring inspection of Him whom outwardly we seem to reverence, not the market-place, the exchange, the counting-room

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appears a place more intensely secular, not the most reckless and riotous festivity a scene of more unhallowed levity than is presented by the House of Prayer?

But, on the other hand, carry holy principles with you into the world, and the world will become hallowed by their presence. A Christ-like spirit will Christianize everything it touches. A meek heart, in which the altar-fire of love to God is burning, will lay hold of the commonest, rudest things in life, and transmute them, like coarse fuel at the touch of fire, into a pure and holy flame. Religion in the soul will make all the work and toil of life—its gains and losses, friendships, rivalries, competitions, its manifold incidents and events—the means of religious advancement. Marble or coarse clay, it matters not much with which of these the artist works, the touch of genius transforms the coarser material into beauty, and lends to the finer a value it never had

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before. Lofty or lowly, rude or refined, as our earthly work may be, it will become to a holy mind only the material for an infinitely nobler than all the creations of genius—a pure and god-like life. To spiritualize what is material, to Christianize what is secular—this is the noble achievement of Christian principle. If you are a sincere Christian, it will be your great desire, by God's grace, to bring every gift, talent, occupation of life, every word you speak, every action you do, under the control of Christian motive. Your conversation may not always—nay, may seldom, save with intimate friends—consist of formally religious words; you may perhaps shrink from the introduction of religious topics in general society; but it demands a less amount of Christian effort occasionally to speak religious words, than to infuse the spirit of religion into all our words; and if the whole tenor of your common talk be pervaded by a spirit of piety, gentle-

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ness, earnestness, sincerity, it will be Christian conversation none the less. If God has endowed you with intellectual gifts, it may be well if you directly devote them to His service in the religious instruction of others; but a man may be a Christian thinker and writer as much when giving to science, or history, or biography, or poetry, a Christian tone and spirit, as when composing sermons or writing hymns. To promote the cause of Christ directly, by furthering every religious and missionary enterprise at home and abroad, is undoubtedly your duty; but remember that your duty terminates not when you have done all this, for you may promote Christ's cause even still more effectually when in your daily demeanour—in the family, in society, in your business transactions, in all your common intercourse with the world—you are diffusing the influence of Christian principle around you by the silent eloquence of a holy life. Rise superior,

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in Christ's strength, to all equivocal practices and advantages in trade; shrink from every approach to meanness or dishonesty; let your eye, fixed on a reward before which earthly wealth grows dim, beam with honour; let the thought of God make you self-restrained, temperate, watchful over speech and conduct; let the abiding sense of Christ's redeeming love to you make you gentle, self-denied, kind, and loving to all around you; then, indeed, will your secular life become spiritualized, whilst, at the same time, your spiritual life will grow more fervent; then not only will your prayers become more devout, but when the knee bends not, and the lip is silent, the life in its heavenward tone will 'pray without ceasing'; then from amidst the roar and din of earthly toil the ear of God will hear the sweetest anthems rising; then, finally, will your daily experience prove that it is no high and unattainable elevation of virtue, but a simple

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and natural thing, to which the text points when it bids us to be both 'diligent in business' and 'fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.'

As a last illustration of the possibility of blending religion with the business of common life, let me call your attention to what may be described as *the Mind's power of acting on Latent Principles*.

In order to live a religious life in the world, every action must be governed by religious motives. But in making this assertion, it is not, by any means, implied that in all the familiar actions of our daily life religion must form a *direct and conscious object* of thought. To be always thinking of God, and Christ, and eternity, amidst our worldly work, and, however busy, eager, interested we may be in the special business before us, to have religious ideas, doctrines, beliefs, present to the mind—this is simply impossible. The mind can no more consciously think of heaven and earth at the same moment

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that the body can be in heaven and earth at the same moment. Moreover, there are few kinds of work in the world that, to be done well, must not be done heartily, many that require, in order to excellence, the whole condensed force and energy of the highest mind.

But though it be true that we cannot, in our worldly work, be always consciously thinking of religion, yet it is also true that unconsciously, insensibly, we may be acting under its ever-present control. As there are laws and powers in the natural world of which, without thinking of them, we are ever availing ourselves—as I do not think of gravitation when I move my limbs, or of atmospheric laws when, by means of them, I breathe, so in the routine of daily work, though comparatively seldom do I think of them, I may yet be constantly swayed by the motives, sustained by the principles, living, breathing, acting in the invisible atmo-

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sphere of true religion. There are undercurrents in the ocean which act independently of the movements of the waters on the surface; far down, too, in its hidden depths there is a region where, even though the storm be raging on the upper waves, perpetual calmness and stillness reign. So there may be an undercurrent beneath the surface-movements of your life—there may dwell in the secret depths of your being the abiding peace of God, the repose of a holy mind, even though, all the while, the restless stir and commotion of worldly business may mark your outer history.

And, in order to see this, it is to be remembered that many of the thoughts and motives that most powerfully impel and govern us in the common actions of life are *latent* thoughts and motives. Have you not often experienced that curious law—a law, perhaps, contrived by God with an express view to this, its highest application—by which a secret

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thought or feeling may lie brooding in your mind, quite apart from the particular work in which you happen to be employed? Have you never, for instance, while reading aloud, carried along with you in your reading the secret impression of the presence of the listener—an impression that kept pace with all the mind's activity in the special work of reading; nay, have you not sometimes felt the mind, while prosecuting without interruption the work of reading, yet at the same time carrying on some other train of reflection apart altogether from that suggested by the book? Here is obviously a particular 'business' in which you were 'diligent,' yet another and different thought to which the 'spirit' turned. Or, think of the work in which I am this moment occupied. Amidst all the mental exertions of the public speaker—underneath the outward workings of his mind, so to speak—there is the latent thought of the presence of his

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auditory. Perhaps no species of exertion requires greater concentration of thought or undividedness of attention than this; and yet, amidst all the subtle processes of intellect—the excogitation or recollection of ideas—the selection, right ordering, and enunciation of words, there never quits his mind for one moment the idea of the presence of the listening throng. Like a secret atmosphere, it surrounds and bathes his spirit as he goes on with the external work. And have you not, too, my friends, an Auditor—it may be, a ‘great cloud of witnesses’—but at least one all-glorious Witness and Listener ever present, ever watchful, as the discourse of life proceeds? Why, then, in this case, too, while the outward business is diligently prosecuted, may there not be on your spirit a latent and constant impression of that awful inspection? What worldly work so absorbing as to leave no room in a believer’s spirit for the hallowing thought of that glorious Presence ever

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near? Do not say that you do not see God—that the presence of the divine Auditor is not forced upon your senses, as that of the human auditory on the speaker. For the same process goes on in the secret meditations as in the public addresses of the preacher—the same latent reference to those who shall listen to his words dwells in his mind when in his solitary retirement he thinks and writes, as when he speaks in their immediate presence. And surely, if the thought of an earthly auditory—of human minds and hearts that shall respond to his thoughts and words—can intertwine itself with all the activities of a man's mind, and flash back inspiration on his soul, at least as potent and as penetrating may the thought be of Him, the Great Lord of heaven and earth, who not only sees and knows us now, but before whose awful presence, in the last great congregation, we shall stand forth to recount and answer for our every thought and deed.

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Or, take but one other example, have we not all felt that the *thought of anticipated happiness* may blend itself with the work of our busiest hours? The labourer's evening release from toil—the schoolboy's coming holiday, or the hard-wrought business man's approaching season of relaxation—the expected return of a long-absent and much-loved friend—is not the thought of these, or similar joyous events, one which often intermingles with, without interrupting, our common work? When a father goes forth to his 'labour till the evening,' perhaps often, very often, in the thick of his toils the thought of home may start up to cheer him. The smile that is to welcome him, as he crosses his lowly threshold when the work of the day is over, the glad faces, and merry voices, and sweet caresses of little ones, as they shall gather round him in the quiet evening hours—the thought of all this may dwell, a latent joy, a hidden motive, deep down in his

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heart of hearts, may come rushing in a sweet solace at every pause of exertion, and act like a secret oil to smooth the wheels of labour. And so, in the other cases, I have named, even when our outward activities are the most strenuous, even when every energy of mind and body is full strung for work, the anticipation of coming happiness may never be absent from our minds. The heart has a secret treasury, where our hopes and joys are often garnered—too precious to be parted with even for a moment.

And why may not the highest of all hopes and joys possess the same all-pervading influence? Have we, if our religion be real, no anticipation of happiness in the glorious future? Is there no 'rest that remaineth for the people of God'? no home and loving heart awaiting us when the toils of our hurried day of life are ended? What is earthly rest or relaxation, what that release from toil after which we so often

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sigh, but the faint shadow of the saint's everlasting rest, the repose of eternal purity, the calm of a spirit in which, not the tension of labour only, but the strain of the moral strife with sin, has ceased, the rest of the soul in God? What visions of earthly bliss can ever, if our Christian faith be not a form, compare with 'the glory soon to be revealed'? What joy of earthly reunion with the rapture of the hour when the heavens shall yield our absent Lord to our embrace, to be parted from us no more for ever! And if all this be not a dream and a fancy, but most sober truth, what is there to except this joyful hope from that law to which, in all other deep joys, our minds are subject? Why may we not in this case, too, think often, amidst our worldly work, of the home to which we are going, of the true and loving heart that beats for us, and of the sweet and joyous welcome that awaits us there? And even when we make them not of set purpose the sub-

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ject of our thoughts, is there not enough of grandeur in the objects of a believer's hope to pervade his spirit at all times with a calm and reverential joy? Do not think this strange, fanatical, impossible. If it do seem so, it can only be because your heart is in the earthly hopes, but not in the higher and holier hopes, because love to Christ is still to you but a name, because you can give more ardour of thought to the anticipation of a coming holiday than to the hope of heaven and glory everlasting. No, my friends; the strange thing is not that amidst the world's work we should be able to think of our home, but that we should ever be able to forget it; and the stranger, sadder still, that while the little day of life is passing—morning, noontide, evening—each stage more rapid than the last, while to many the shadows are already fast lengthening, and the declining sun warns them that 'the night is at hand, wherein no man can work,' there should be those

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amongst us whose whole thoughts are absorbed in the business of the world, and to whom the reflection never occurs that soon they must go out into eternity without a friend, without a home.

Such, then, is the true idea of the Christian life,—a life not of periodic observances, or of occasional fervours, or even of splendid acts of heroism and self-devotion, but of quiet, constant, unobtrusive earnestness, amidst the commonplace work of the world. This is the life to which Christ calls us. Is it yours? Have you entered upon it, or are you now willing to enter upon it? It is not, I admit, an imposing or an easy one. There is nothing in it to dazzle, much in its hardness and plainness to deter the irresolute. The life of a follower of Christ demands not, indeed, in our day, the courage of the hero or the martyr, the fortitude that braves outward dangers and sufferings, and flinches not from persecution and death. But with the age of persecution

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the difficulties of the Christian life have not passed away. In maintaining, in the unambitious routine of humble duties, a spirit of Christian cheerfulness and contentment—in preserving the fervour of piety amidst unexciting cares and wearing anxieties, in the perpetual reference to lofty ends amidst lowly toils—there may be evinced a faith as strong as that of the man who dies with the song of martyrdom on his lips. It is a great thing to love Christ so dearly as to be 'ready to be bound and to die' for Him; but it is often a thing not less great to be ready to take up our daily cross, and to live for Him.

But be the difficulties of a Christian life in the world what they may, they need not discourage us. Whatever the work to which our Master calls us, He offers us a strength commensurate with our needs. No man who wishes to serve Christ will ever fail for lack of heavenly aid. And it will be no valid excuse for an ungodly life that it is

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difficult to keep alive the flame of piety in the world if Christ be ready to supply the fuel.

To all, then, who really wish to lead such a life, let me suggest that the first thing to be done—that without which all other efforts are worse than vain—is heartily to devote themselves to God through Christ Jesus. Much as has been said of the infusion of religious principle and motive into our worldly work, there is a preliminary advice of greater importance still—that we *be religious*. Life comes before growth. The soldier must enlist before he can serve. In vain directions how to keep the fire ever burning on the altar if first it be not kindled. No religion can be genuine, no goodness can be constant or lasting, that springs not, as its primary source, from faith in Jesus Christ. To know Christ as my Saviour, to come with all my guilt and weakness to Him in whom trembling penitence never fails to find a friend, to cast my-

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self at His feet in whom all that is sublime in Divine holiness is softened, though not obscured, by all that is beautiful in human tenderness; and, believing in that love stronger than death which for me, and such as me, drained the cup of untold sorrows, and bore without a murmur the bitter curse of sin; to trust my soul for time and eternity into His hands—this is the beginning of true religion. And it is the reverential love with which the Believer must ever look to Him to whom he owes so much that constitutes the main-spring of the religion of daily life. Selfishness may prompt a formal religion, natural susceptibility may give rise to a fitful one, but for a life of constant, fervent piety, amidst the world's cares and toils, no motive is sufficient save one—self-devoted love to Christ.

But, again, if you would lead a Christian life in the world, let me remind you that that life must be *continued* as well as begun in Christ. You

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must learn to look to Him not merely as your Saviour from guilt, but as the Friend of your secret life, the Chosen Companion of your solitary hours, the Depository of all the deeper thoughts and feelings of your soul. You cannot live *for* Him in the world unless you live much *with* Him apart from the world. In spiritual as in secular things, the deepest and strongest characters need much solitude to form them. Even earthly greatness—much more moral and spiritual greatness—is never attained but as the result of much that is concealed from the world, of many a lonely and meditative hour. Thoughtfulness, self-knowledge, self-control, a chastened wisdom and piety, are the fruit of habitual meditation and prayer. In these exercises heaven is brought near, and our exaggerated estimate of earthly things corrected. By these our spiritual energies, shattered and worn by the friction of worldly work, are repaired. In the recurring seasons of

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devotion the cares and anxieties of worldly business cease to vex us; exhausted with its toils, we have, in daily communion with God, 'meat to eat which the world knoweth not of'; and even when its calamities and losses fall upon us, and our portion of worldly good may be withdrawn, we may be able to show, like those holy ones of old at the heathen court, by the fair, serene countenance of the spirit, that we have something better than the world's pulse to feed upon.

But, further, availing yourself of this Divine resource amidst the daily exigencies of life, why should you wait always for the periodic season and for the formal attitude of prayer? The heavens are not open to the believer's call only at intervals. The grace of God's Holy Spirit falls not like the fertilizing shower, only now and then; or like the dew on the earth's face, only at morning and night. At all times on the uplifted face of the believer's spirit the

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gracious element is ready to descend,
Pray always; pray without ceasing.
When difficulties arise, delay not to seek,
and obtain at once the succour you need.
Swifter than by the subtle electric agent
is thought born: from earth to heaven.
The Great Spirit on high is in constant
sympathy with the believing spirit be-
neath, and in a moment, in the twink-
ling of an eye, the thrill of aspiration
flashes from the heart of man to God.
Whenever anything vexes you—when-
ever, from the rude and selfish ways of
men, any trials of temper cross your
path—when your spirits are ruffled, or
your Christian forbearance put to the
test, be this your instant resource!
Haste away, if only for a moment, to
the serene and peace-breathing presence
of Jesus, and you will not fail to return
with a spirit soothed and calmed. Or
when the impure and low-minded sur-
round you—when, in the path of duty,
the high tone of your Christian purity
is apt to suffer from baser contacts, oh,,

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what relief to lift the heart to Christ !—to rise on the wings of faith—even for one instant to breathe the air of that region where the Infinite Purity dwells, and then return with a mind steeled against temptation, ready to recoil with the instinctive abhorrence of a spirit that has been beside the Throne, from all that is impure and vile. • Say not, then, with such aid at your command, that religion cannot be brought down to common life !

• In conclusion, let me once more urge upon you the great lesson on which we have been insisting. Carry religious principle into every-day life. Principle elevates whatever it touches. Facts lose all their littleness to the mind which brings principle and law to bear upon them. • The chemist's or geologist's soiled hands are no sign of base work ; the coarsest operations of the laboratory, the breaking of stones with a hammer, cease to be mechanical when intellectual thought and principle govern

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the mind and guide the hands. And religious principle is the noblest of all. Bring it to bear on common actions and coarse cares, and infinitely nobler even than the philosophic or scientific becomes the Christian life. Live for Christ in common things, and all your work will become priestly work. As in the temple of old it was holy work to hew wood or mix oil, because it was done for the altar-sacrifice or the sacred lamps, so all your coarse and common work will receive a consecration when done for God's glory by one who is a true priest to His temple.

Carry religion into common life, and your life will be rendered useful as well as noble. There are many men who listen incredulously to the high-toned exhortations of the pulpit; the religious life there depicted is much too seraphic, they think, for this plain and prosaic world of ours. Show these men that the picture is not a fancy one. Make it a reality. Bring religion down from

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the clouds. Apply to it the infallible test of experiment, and, by suffusing your daily actions with holy principles, prove that love to God, superiority to worldly pleasure, spirituality, holiness, heavenly-mindedness, are something more than the stock ideas of sermons.

- Carry religious principle into common life, and common life will lose its transitoriness. 'The world passeth away!' 'The things that are seen are temporal.'

Soon business with all its cares and anxieties—the whole 'unprofitable stir and fever of the world'—will be to us a thing of the past. But religion does something better than sigh and muse over the perishableness of earthly things; it finds in them the seed of immortality. No work done for Christ perishes. No action that helps to mould the deathless mind of a saint of God is ever lost. Live for Christ in the world, and you carry out with you into eternity all the results of the world's business that are worth the keeping. The river of life sweeps

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on, but the gold grains it held in solution are left behind, deposited in the holy heart. 'The world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.' Every other result of our 'diligence in business' will soon be gone. You cannot invent any mode of exchange between the visible and invisible worlds, so that the balance at your credit in the one can be transferred, when you migrate from it, to your account in the other. Worldly sharpness, acuteness, versatility, are not the qualities in request in the world to come. The capacious intellect, stored with knowledge, and disciplined into admirable perspicacity, tact, worldly wisdom, by a lifetime devoted to politics or business, is not, by such attainments, fitted to take a higher place among the sons of immortality. The honour, fame, respect, obsequious homage that attend worldly greatness up to the grave's brink will not follow it one step beyond. These.

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advantages are not to be despised ; but if these be all that, by the toil of our hand, or the sweat of our brow, we have gained, the hour is fast coming when we shall discover that we have laboured in vain and spent our strength for nought. But while these pass, there are other things that remain. The world's gains and losses may soon cease to affect us, but not the gratitude or the patience, the kindness or the resignation, they drew forth from our hearts. The world's scenes of business may fade on our sight, the noise of its restless pursuits may fall no more upon our ear, when we pass to meet our God ; but not one unselfish thought, not one kind and gentle word, not one act of self-sacrificing love done for Jesus' sake, in the midst of our common work, but will have left an indelible impress on the soul which will go out with it to its eternal destiny. So live, then, that this may be the result of your labours. So live that your work, whether in the

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Church or in the world, may become a discipline for that glorious state of being in which the Church and the world shall become one—where work shall be worship, and labour shall be rest—where the worker shall never quit the temple, nor the worshipper the place of work, because 'there is no temple therein, but the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple thereof.'

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